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Grand Forks Herald

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2019

WHEN SUSPECTS FLEE

North Dakota sees job gains, but are they due to tax cuts?

By Emily Allen
 Grand Forks Herald

With some data showing North Dakota added about 9,000 jobs last year, Sen. Kevin Cramer is crediting federal tax cuts implemented in late 2017 for the gain.

But a UND economist says the number of new jobs is too small and too broad for any correlation to federal policy like the one Cramer, R-N.D., referred to in a tweet on Wednesday.

"The tax cuts are working in North Dakota," Cramer wrote on Twitter. "Since they were passed, we've added over 9,000 jobs."

North Dakota added about 8,300 jobs between December 2017 and December 2018, according to a report from Job Service North Dakota while the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics said the number was nearly 9,000.

Cramer's office confirmed the



Cramer

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Roosevelt officials try to piece together records

By Tess Williams
 Grand Forks Herald

ROOSEVELT, Minn. — Things are off to a rocky start for the Roosevelt City Council as its recently elected city officials attempt to piece together the town's budget from bank statements and a disorganized box of papers left for them by previous council members.

Mayor Gerald Landby said he'd hoped to find a spreadsheet tracking monthly finances and previous transactions on the laptop included with the box of paperwork — but no such luck.

"We haven't gotten a lot of cooperation from the former council members," he said.

Roosevelt came under fire after a former council member was cited for allegedly threatening a reporter during the Oct. 1 council meeting.

Reporter Doris Knutson, of Baudette's weekly Northern Light Region, said she called out the council for not complying with open meeting laws and was

ROOSEVELT: Page A6



Herald file photo

Officials look at the wreckage of a passenger car Aug. 2 in front of St. Mary's Catholic Church near downtown Grand Forks. Earlier that morning, Grand Forks police initiated a traffic stop in the 1900 block of 17th Avenue South for expired license plates. The driver, Tony James Smith, attempted to evade officers and sped off. Police terminated the chase near 1000 block of Belmont Avenue because of the reason for the stop, time of day, lighting, location and danger to the public. Seconds later, Smith's vehicle crashed into a tree near 216 Belmont Road while going between 59 and 69 miles per hour. Smith died at the scene.

Herald analysis shows police chases in GF doubled in 2018, resulting in recent high mark

By April Baumgarten
 Grand Forks Herald

When he was a patrol officer, Grand Forks Police Lt. Derik Zimmel hated being involved in vehicle pursuits.

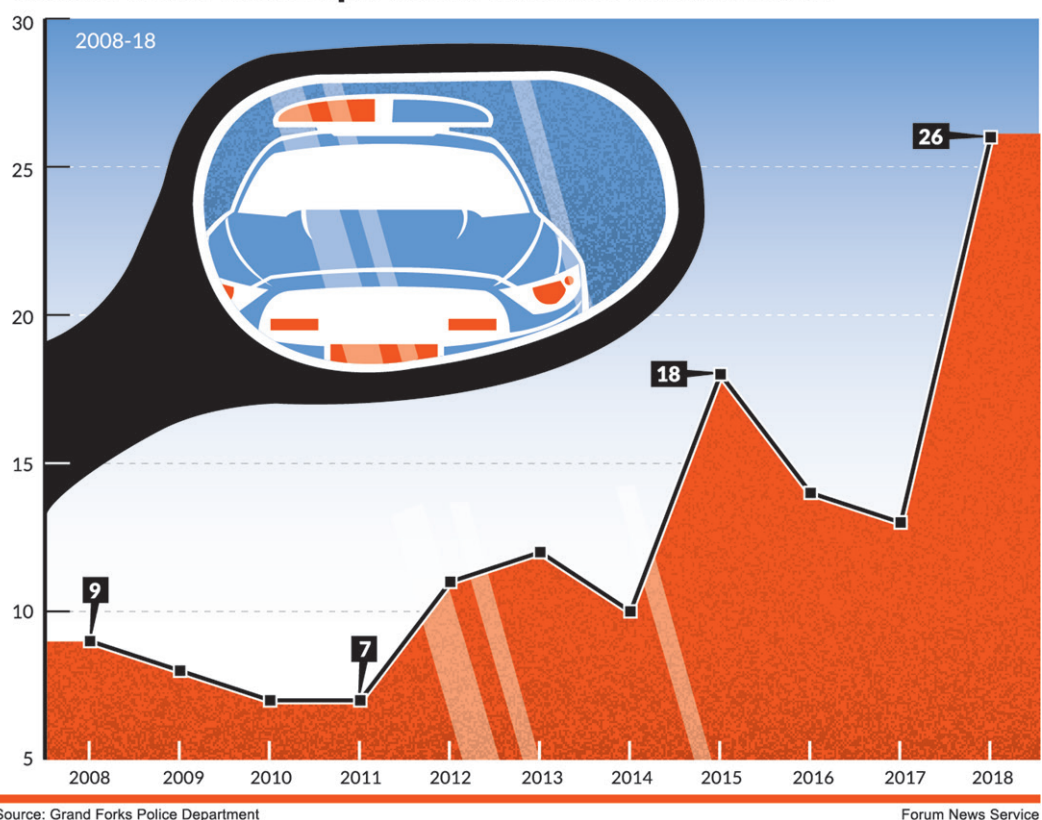
Chases glorified in TV shows and movies make pursuits appear exciting, keeping viewers on the edge of their seats. Some portray officers who love pursuits. Zimmel said he can't speak for all officers, but he doesn't know any who would choose to be involved in a pursuit if given the choice.

"No pursuit is ever safe," Zimmel said. "Every pursuit is dangerous, and nobody ever wants to be in one. I don't want to crash. I don't want anybody else to crash."

In Grand Forks, 2018 produced 25 police chases for the Grand Forks Police Department, more than any other year in the last decade, according to numbers

CHASES: Page A5

Grand Forks Police Department-involved vehicle chases



2018 police chases: An in-depth review

By April Baumgarten
 Grand Forks Herald

Below is a list of vehicle chases that occurred in 2018 after Grand Forks Police tried to stop suspects. It was the most active year for Grand Forks Police-involved pursuits in the city in recent history. All 25 summaries are according to police reports, criminal complaints and Herald archives. Some cases are still open, and the details laid out are allegations unless defendants have pleaded guilty. The names of juveniles

are not considered open record, so their names were redacted from police reports.

Robert Jay Smith Jr., 23, Grand Forks: 2:33 a.m., Jan. 18. Started in 4100 block of 17th Avenue South on suspicion of reckless driving and driving under the influence. Ended on DeMers Avenue near South 42nd Street after vehicle drove onto median and became stuck. Speeds approximately 15 to 30 mph, lasted 2 miles. Smith pleaded guilty to reckless driving, open container and driving under the

influence; no jail time. Stop initiated by Cpl. April Prock. Officers involved: Adam Solar, Jay Farmer, Jordan Drees, Barb McLeod.

Carlos C. Rodriguez Jr., 36, Grand Forks: 1:02 a.m., Feb. 28. Started in 1400 block of 17th Avenue South for only having one headlight illuminated. Also had two active warrants. The chase ended in 1100 block of 22nd Avenue South when vehicle stopped. Speeds were at 15 mph. Officer drew weapon, but it was not fired.

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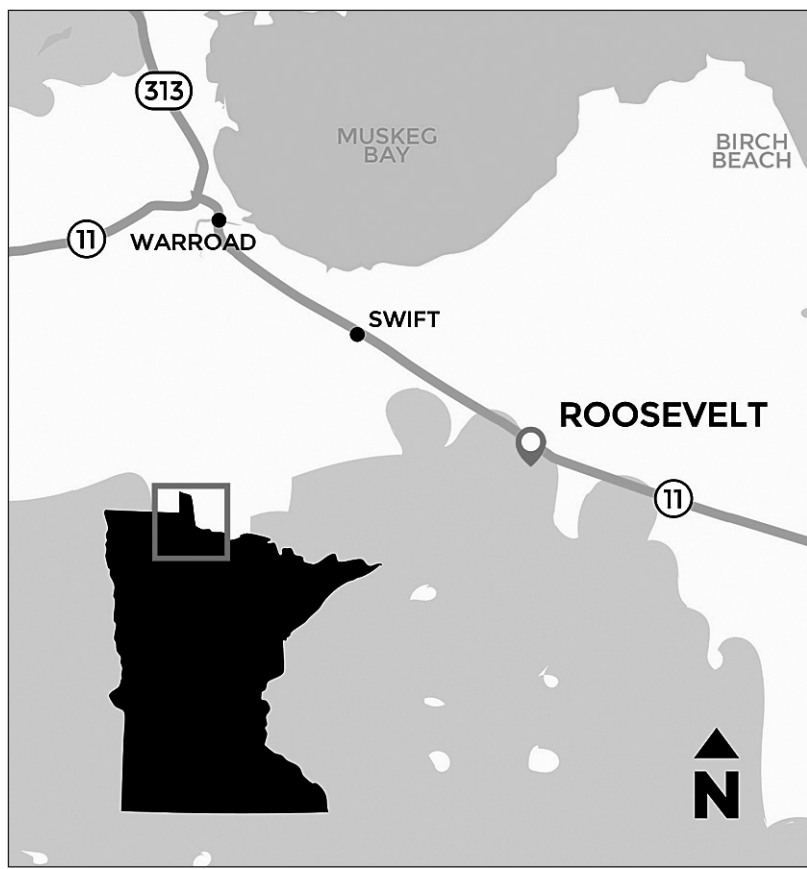
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then berated by former council member Arlyn Stewart and former City Clerk Alyce Siats.

Stewart was issued a misdemeanor citation related to the incident. He motioned last month for the case to be dismissed, although no decision has been made yet.

Knutson said she's been covering the small, 150-person town for about a year after citizens told her of dysfunction. She said council members were short-tempered and had screamed at citizens during meetings, and the council frequently disregarded open-meeting laws, which require a government meeting be posted in advance to notify the public. She said the council was also unable to produce financial records for the last eight years.

Roosevelt residents voted every sitting member of council out of office in the November election. Stewart's term was not up for another two years, but he resigned after



the election.

A records request by the Herald sent in October went unanswered until January, when new officials took office.

Landby said he's still working to comply with the request, but things haven't been easy since he took office.

Former council members had

not been checking the mail because Siats had the only key to the mailbox. Access to the bank account had also not been secured since her October resignation.

Landby said both issues have been resolved now and the town has hired a new city clerk. But, he's still not sure exactly where or if full financial records or meeting minutes exist for previous years.

He said the council was handed over a laptop without any data on it and a box with files of incomplete receipts and notes. He said the most recent financial files he's found were from about 2015 and previous meeting minutes didn't include vote tallies or detail about discussions.

"It's not really a positive report to share, but it's the reality," he said. "And we know there's a better way to do business than that."

Landby said he's still working to piece together financial papers and bank statements to get a clearer picture of what the town's budget looks like.

He said there's also no official code book, which lists the city ordinances. Landby said he

knows ordinances have been passed by previous councils, but said there doesn't appear to be an existing official record.

While there have been a lot of roadblocks, Landby is optimistic. He said it's been a good learning experience for himself and the other council members. They had a training session Tuesday with officials from the League of Minnesota Cities so they could address problems and learn how to efficiently run the town.

Landby said he's seen a lot of support from citizens and hopes the public will attend meetings and get involved.

"What's been good about this situation and sort of starting from scratch has been the opportunity to invite the public to learn with us about government and get educated along with us," he said. "We always get a lot of people who attend when there's drama, but we don't want any of that. I know that sometimes meetings can seem dry, but we want people to come and learn and be involved with us."

Reach the writer at 701-780-1267, twilliams@gfherald.com or on Twitter @ByTessWilliams.

REVIEW

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Pleaded guilty to fleeing police, driving under suspension and theft, 30 days in jail. Stop initiated by Adam Solar. Officers involved: Christopher Brown, Daniel Essig, Heather Hopkins.

Steven Ross Johnson, 28, Fargo: 1:45 a.m., March 1. Pursuit started in East Grand Forks, went through Grand Forks, ended 10 miles southwest of Thompson when spike strips were deployed. Speeds between 65 and 90 mph for 25 miles. Listed as assisting Grand Forks County Sheriff's Office and East Grand Forks Police Department. Officers involved: Jay Farmer, Danny Pemberton. Johnson pleaded guilty to fleeing police and driving under suspension, 45 days in Polk County jail, 13 days in Grand Forks County jail.

Dana Andrew Decoteau, 52, Belcourt, N.D.: 9:59 p.m., March 7. Started in 3600 block of 13th Avenue North in relation to a domestic violence case. Vehicle refused to stop, but pursuit ended when officers used a pursuit intervention technique (PIT) maneuver in the 3600 block of Gateway Drive. Pleased guilty to fleeing, 88 days in jail. No summary of report was provided, but reporting officer was Ryan Wadlow, assisted by Michael Jennings. Also assisted by UND Police.

Brent Joseph LaFontaine, 32, Rolla, N.D.: 12:52 a.m., March 11. Started in 200 block of North Washington Street after officer noticed expired plates and not having tail lights illuminated. Crossed into East Grand Forks, forcing Grand Forks police to terminate chase and East Grand Forks Police took over. LaFontaine's vehicle collided with an East Grand Forks patrol car head on. Speeds exceeded 100 mph for about 3 miles. LaFontaine and his passenger, Victoria Elizabeth Dubois, 32, were taken to Altru Hospital. Both were arrested — Dubois had an active warrant in Rolette County. LaFontaine pleaded guilty to fleeing, reckless endangerment and driving under suspension in Grand Forks County, possession of marijuana, fleeing and driving while impaired in Polk County. Sentenced to 360 days in jail to run concurrent with Polk County sentence, which hasn't been handed down. Stop initiated by Daniel Harvala, assisted by Jesse Younggren. Also assisted by EGF Police.

Michael John Sebjornson, 33, Grand Forks: 11:43 a.m., March 11. Stop initiated near Second Avenue North and North 22nd Street after officers located a vehicle matching that of a suspect in an assault case at Budget Inn. Vehicle stopped at Ninth Avenue North and North Fifth Street after officers used a police maneuver. Pursuit lasted about 3 miles with speeds hitting high 40s mph. Sebjornson was arrested on an escape warrant. He pleaded guilty to fleeing, reckless driving and driving under suspension. Stop initiated by Kevin Kallinen. Officers involved: Travis Benson, Preston Engstrom, Derrick Johnston, Patrick Torok and Ashley Monreal.

Darrell Timothy Azure, 68, Grand Forks: 8:07 p.m., March 17. Stop initiated in 3500 block of Gateway Drive after officers were alerted to suspected drunk driver and Azure's vehicle matched the description, according to a news release. Classified as a low-speed chase, the pursuit lasted 10 blocks before Azure stopped, release said. Pleased guilty to fleeing, DUI and driving under suspension, sentenced to 120 days, but the case appears to have been reopened and inactive. No summary of report was attached, but reporting officer was Heather Hopkins, assisted by Brandon Eberhardt.

Unknown juvenile: Midnight, March 25. Address given in report was Library South circle and South 17th Street, and offenses listed were fleeing, reckless endangerment, drug equipment violations and driving under suspension. Case is listed active. No summary provided. Reporting officer was Andrew Ebertowski.

Three unknown juveniles: 2:32 a.m., June 21. Stop initiated in 2000 block of 30th Avenue South for a report of stolen vehicle. The 3-mile chase ended in 1000 block of North Columbia Road after vehicle hit a median at 80 mph, went off the road, struck a tree, tumbled into a crash and came to rest on the wheels. Speeds ranged from 35 to 100 mph. Four juveniles fled but were located and taken to Altru Hospital for minor injuries. Charges included theft of property, reckless endangerment and fleeing, among other charges. A summary was released, indicating the case is closed. Stop initiated by Daniel Essig.

Mark Matthew Allery Jr., 28, of Grand Forks: 2:30 a.m., June 24. Stop initiated at 17th Avenue South and Oak Street for a U-turn and vehicle equipment violation. Chase ended after about a mile

when vehicle stopped in 800 block of Reeves Drive. Speeds reached almost 80 mph. Rodney Neil Davis, 29, Belcourt, N.D., fled on foot. Allery pleaded guilty to reckless endangerment and fleeing, 86 days in jail. One of his passengers Samantha Marie Delong, 28, of Belcourt, pleaded guilty to drug paraphernalia possession, providing false information to officers and possession of meth with intent to deliver, about 16 months in prison. Davis has yet to appear in Grand Forks District Court on delivery of meth and refusal to halt charges

Stop initiated by Andrew Ebertowski, assisted by Daniel Essig, Nicholas Fugazzi, Caleb Nelson, Brandon Steffan, Barb McLeod, Christopher Brown and Kristofer Brown.

Unknown: 3:40 a.m., June 29. Stop initiated at South 10th Street and 32nd Avenue South because rear lights weren't working. Officer lost sight at 1800 28th Avenue South after less than a mile with speeds reaching 74 mph. Case filed inactive. Stop initiated by Andrew Ebertowski, assisted by Casey Black, Michael Ruit and Ryan Wadlow.

Monitez James Henry Jr., 34, Grand Forks: 8:54 a.m., June 29. Stop initiated on DeMers Avenue near North Third Street after U.S. Marshal's Service requested assistance on finding Henry. Vehicle fled into East Grand Forks and stopped near 408 First Ave. N.E., but Henry got out of the car while it was rolling, a police report alleged. Henry was apprehended in the building and was charged with fleeing in Grand Forks County. The case is listed inactive while he faces charges in Polk County. Summary was not provided since case is considered open in court. Chase lasted about a mile, but no speeds were provided. Stop initiated by Matthew Bullinger, assisted by Jerad Braaten and Nicholas Fugazzi.

Tyrone Franklin Lake, 21, Kayenta, Ariz.: 10:02 p.m., July 10. Stop initiated in the 2000 block of DeMers Avenue for speeding at "high rate." Chase ended after about 2 miles at La Quinta Inn after vehicle parked. Speeds exceeded 80 mph. Lake pleaded guilty to fleeing, DUI and reckless driving, 60 days in jail. His passenger Ernie Eric White, 35, Tuba City, Ariz., pleaded guilty to refusal to halt after fleeing on foot and open container, 18 days in jail. Stop initiated by Brandon Steffan.

Unknown juveniles: 3:17 a.m., July 26. Stop

initiated by Grand Forks County Sheriff's Office near 5500 University Avenue. Deputies requested assistance from Grand Forks Police Department since the pursuit was within city limits. Vehicle pursuit ended in 5300 block of Fourth Avenue North before police arrived and three suspects fled on foot, all of whom eventually were apprehended. Pursuit was less than a mile with speeds unknown. Suspects faced charges. Reporting officer was Andrew Ebertowski, assisted by Daniel Essig, Kristofer Brown and Christopher Brown.

Tony James Smith, 33, Grand Forks: 5:16 a.m., Aug. 2. Stop initiated in 1900 block of 17th Avenue South for expired license plates. Speeds ranged from 60 to 90 mph. Chase was terminated near 1000 block of Belmont Avenue due to the reason for the stop, time of day, lighting, location and danger to the public. Seconds later, vehicle crashed into a tree near 216 Belmont Road while going between 59 and 69 mph. Smith died at the scene. Officers said they could smell alcohol on Smith's breath while performing CPR on him, and what they suspected was marijuana was recovered from his person. Stop initiated by Adam Solar. Assisted by Kristofer Brown, Andrew Ebertowski, Luke Wentz, Christopher Brown, Robert Buelow and Matthew Woodley.

Houston Charles Crippen, 19, Arvilla, N.D.: 12:28 a.m., Aug. 8. Stop initiated in the 4300 block of Gateway Drive for speeding and failure to use headlights, according to a news release. Ended in the 2000 block Gateway after a nearly 2-mile chase when Crippen hit curb, became stuck and backed into a police car. Speeds exceeded 100 mph. He and his three passengers fled on foot but were captured quickly. Crippen pleaded guilty to reckless endangerment, fleeing, criminal mischief and providing false information to officers, two months in jail. Case has been re-opened in court, so no summary of chase has been provided. Dustin Duane Kirkeby, 20, and two juveniles also were charged in relation to the chase. Kirkeby pleaded guilty to refusal to halt, 14 days in jail. Stop initiated by Daniel Essig

Paul Fitzgerald Smith, 25, Grand Forks: 2:53 a.m., Nov. 6. Stop was initiated in 2000 block of 27th Avenue South for failure to have tail lights on. Vehicle jumped a curb, drove through stop sign and eventually slid across a median, losing the back right tire. Vehicle at times was driving in wrong direction. Chase ended after about 4 miles at 58th Avenue and Lou Ann Street after vehicle became stuck. Vehicle was reported stolen. Smith faces numerous charges, including theft, fleeing and reckless endangerment. No summary or speeds provided since case is open in court. Stop initiated by Adam Solar.

Cory Will Hanson, 27, Grand Forks: 11:55 p.m., Nov. 17. Stop initiated near Campbell Drive and South Washington Street after vehicle failed to stop at red light. Car hit a Grand Forks Police Department vehicle during chase. The chase ended after driver struck the porch of a residence and parked in an alley on South 10th Street before fleeing. Hanson pleaded guilty to reckless endangerment, fleeing, leaving scene of an accident and DUI, 86 days in jail. Stop initiated by Matthew Woodley, assisted by Cody Holte, James Wright, Kristofer Brown, Nick Foley, Brandon Eberhardt. Jesse

and Kevin Kallinen.

Holden Michael Myers, 20, Dunseith, N.D.: 12:32 a.m., Sept. 28. Stop initiated near South 20th Street and DeMers for unreadable license plate on motorcycle. Incident ended after a nearly 7-mile chase near Grand Forks International Airport when motorcycle crashed. Myers fled but was apprehended. Speeds exceeded 100 mph. Pleased guilty to theft of property, fleeing and driving under suspension, no additional jail time, but prosecutors have filed a petition for a revocation of probation hearing. Stop initiated by Christopher Brown, assisted by Erik Hamilton, Michael Ruit and Cody Holte.

Tanner Anthony Norling, 27, East Grand Forks: 9:06 p.m., Oct. 15. Stop initiated near 24th Avenue South and South 26th Street after vehicle failed to use turning signal and was traveling at a high rate of speed. Chase ended after a half mile when vehicle drove into the Columbia Heights trailer park. Pleased guilty to driving under suspension, 30 days in jail. No summary provided since case remains open in court for the fleeing charge. Stop initiated by Luke Wentz, assisted by Casey Black and Mark Nichols.

Carlos C. Rodriguez Jr., 36, Grand Forks: 12:42 a.m., Dec. 20. Stop initiated at 400 Gateway Driver stopped for failure to turn tail lights on. The 4-mile chase ended in CanadInn parking lot after vehicle stopped. Speeds ranges from 25 to 40 mph, according to a news release. Charged with fleeing and driving under suspension. No summary provided since case is open in court. This case is separate from the Feb. 28 chase. Stop initiated by Cody Holte, assisted by Mark Nichols, Adam Solar, Caleb Nelson, Rory Suby, James Wright, Casey Black, Preston Engstrom and Heather Hopkins.

Saha Bahaour Darji, 53, Grand Forks: 6:03 p.m., Dec. 22. Stop initiated in 700 block of 40th Avenue South after report of erratic driving. Driving conditions were poor due to reduced visibility and icy roads. Speeds ranged from 20 to 40 mph. The mile-long chase ended in the 3200 block of South Washington Street after car was boxed in by three squad cars. Two children were located in the back seat uninjured. Charged with fleeing, reckless endangerment, third DUI in seven years and refusal to submit to a chemical test. Summary not provided since case is open in court. Stop initiated by Casey Black.

Baumgarten is a reporter with the Herald. Contact her at (701) 780-1248 or baumgarten@gfherald.com. Follow her on Twitter @aprilbaumsawav.

Youngren, Caleb Nelson and Douglas Wright.

Unknown: 1:13 a.m., Nov. 22. Stop initiated in 1200 block of South Columbia Road for several traffic violations, including failure to illuminate tail and headlights. Vehicle almost hit another but avoided a crash. Chase was terminated near DeMers Avenue and Washington Street due to safety concerns. Speeds ranged from 45 to 100 mph, with chase lasting about 3 miles. The vehicle was determined to be stolen from a Fargo storage facility but was recovered several days after the chase. The suspect was never located. Stop initiated by Michael Ruit.

Charles Murray Rodriguez, 30, Grand Forks: 5:15 a.m., Dec. 6. Stop initiated near 3600 block of Gateway Drive for window tint violation. Also had at least one active arrest warrant. Ended when vehicle stopped in parking lot at 1114 N. 39th Street after driving less than a mile. Speeds reached 50 in 25 mph zone. Pleased guilty to fleeing and driving under suspension, two days in jail. Stop initiated by Daniel Essig.

Paul Fitzgerald Smith, 25, Grand Forks: 2:53 a.m., Nov. 6. Stop was initiated in 2000 block of 27th Avenue South for failure to have tail lights on. Vehicle jumped a curb, drove through stop sign and eventually slid across a median, losing the back right tire. Vehicle at times was driving in wrong direction. Chase ended after about 4 miles at 58th Avenue and Lou Ann Street after vehicle became stuck. Vehicle was reported stolen. Smith faces numerous charges, including theft, fleeing and reckless endangerment. No summary or speeds provided since case is open in court. Stop initiated by Adam Solar.

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